



# News Release

## **WISCONSIN ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Witmer Hall memorial will honor 38 Wisconsin fallen heroes**

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### **Dedication set for Memorial Day in Madison**

Twenty-seven families of the fallen will take part in a Memorial Day ceremony in Madison as the Wisconsin National Guard dedicates the state's first memorial to all 38 Wisconsin service members who have died in military service since September 11.

The event will begin at 11:30 a.m. Monday, May 30, on the grounds of the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs headquarters, 2400 Wright Street, Madison. Gov. Jim Doyle and Maj. Gen. Al Wilkening will lead the dedication program. They will be joined by about 150 family members of fallen Wisconsin service members, members of the Wisconsin Army and Air National Guard, and representatives of the other U.S. armed forces. The public is also welcome to attend.

The Department of Military Affairs auditorium will be named "Witmer Hall" in honor of Wisconsin Army National Guard Spc. Michelle Witmer. Witmer was a member of the 32nd Military Police Company when she was killed in action in Baghdad April 9, 2004, at the age of 20. Michelle Witmer was the first Wisconsin National Guard soldier to be killed in action since World War II, and the first female soldier killed in combat in the 368-year history of the National Guard.

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The memorial also recognizes Wisconsin's other fallen heroes from the September 11 attack on the Pentagon, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. These 37 other soldiers and Marines include Wisconsin Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Todd Olson, who was mortally wounded Dec. 26, 2004, in Samarra, Iraq, shortly after his unit, 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, arrived in Iraq for a one-year mission.

The honor roll of Wisconsin's fallen service members begins with Army Lt. Col. Dennis Johnson, Port Edwards, who was killed at the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001. The others include 22 soldiers of the U.S. Army, Army Reserve and Army National Guard who were killed in Iraq, one U.S. Army soldier killed in Afghanistan, and 14 U.S. Marines and Marine Corps Reservists killed in Iraq.

The 38 service members from Wisconsin ranged in age from 18 to 48. Nearly half of them were members of the National Guard or Reserve. Three are women — one each from the U.S. Army, the Army Reserve and the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

Witmer Hall will include a life-size bronze bust of Michelle, which becomes a permanent addition to the Wisconsin National Guard's state headquarters lobby. Nationally renowned artist Gwendolyn Gillen of Milwaukee was commissioned to create the bronze portrait of Michelle.

Each of the 38 soldiers and Marines killed since 9-11 will be memorialized by an individual cast bronze plaque permanently affixed at the entrance to Witmer Hall. They are:

- Lt. Col. Dennis Johnson, Port Edwards, U.S. Army (Pentagon)
- Sgt. Kirk Straseskie, Beaver Dam, U.S. Marine Corps
- Maj. Mathew Schram, Brookfield, U.S. Army
- Sgt. 1st Class Dan Gabrielson, Frederic, U.S. Army Reserve
- Spc. Paul Sturino, Rice Lake, U.S. Army
- Pfc. Rachel Bosveld, Waupun, U.S. Army

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- 1st Lt. Jeremy Wolfe, Menomonie, U.S. Army
- Spc. Eugene Uhl III, Amherst, U.S. Army
- Sgt. Warren Hansen, Clintonville, U.S. Army
- Maj. Christopher Splinter, Platteville, U.S. Army
- Spc. Robert Cook, Sun Prairie, U.S. Army (Afghanistan)
- Pfc. Nichole Frye, Lena, U.S. Army Reserve
- Spc. Bert Hoyer, Ellsworth, U.S. Army Reserve
- Capt. John Kurth, Columbus, U.S. Army
- Pfc. Sean Schneider, Janesville, U.S. Army
- Pfc. Ryan Jerabek, Hobart, U.S. Marine Corps
- Cpl. Jesse Thiry, Casco, U.S. Marine Corps
- Spc. Michelle Witmer, New Berlin, Wisconsin Army National Guard
- Spc. Michael McGlothin, Milwaukee, U.S. Army
- Spc. Justin Linden, Clinton, Oregon Army National Guard
- Staff Sgt. Charles Kiser, Cleveland, U.S. Army Reserve
- Staff Sgt. Stephen Martin, Rhinelander, U.S. Army Reserve
- Cpl. Adrian V. Soltau, Milwaukee, U.S. Marine Corps
- Pfc. Andrew Halverson, Shopiere, U.S. Marine Corps
- Lance Cpl. Daniel R. Wyatt, Calendonia, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve
- Cpl. Robert P. Warns II, Waukesha, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve
- Lance Cpl. Shane K. O'Donnell, Deforest, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve
- Staff Sgt. Todd R. Cornell, West Bend, U.S. Army Reserve
- Cpl. Brian R. Prening, Plymouth, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve
- Pfc. Isaiah R. Hunt, Suamico, U.S. Army
- Sgt. Benjamin Edinger, Green Bay, U.S. Marine Corps
- Lance Cpl. Ryan Cantafio, Beaver Dam, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve
- Pfc. Brent T. Vroman, Oshkosh, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve
- Lance Cpl. Richard D. Warner, Waukesha, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve

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- Staff Sgt. Todd D. Olson, Loyal, Wisconsin Army National Guard
- Lance Cpl. Travis M. Wichlacz, West Bend, U.S. Marine Corps Reserve
- Sgt. 1st Class Donald Eacho, Black Creek, U.S. Army
- Staff Sgt. Andrew Bossert, Fountain City, U.S. Army

All costs associated with the \$41,000 project were paid by individual and organizational contributors.

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**NOTE TO EDITORS AND NEWS DIRECTORS:** This event will begin at 11:30 a.m. Monday, May 30, outside the front entrance of the Department of Military Affairs headquarters, 2400 Wright Street, Madison. The National Guard's 132nd Army Band will accompany the ceremony, which is expected to include a reading of 38 names, followed by remarks by sculptor Gwendolyn Gillen, Maj. Gen. Al Wilkening and Gov. Jim Doyle.

We have reserved space on a low rooftop overlooking the grounds for still cameras and television coverage. A ground-level area will also be reserved for cameras. An audio distribution system (mult box) will be available at ground level near the stage. A reserved parking area for television trucks will be made available near the event site in the south parking lot (entrance off Minuteman Drive).

The ceremony moves indoors at noon, where Witmer Hall will be dedicated and the bronze bust of Michelle will be unveiled.

Space inside is limited, however we will reserve an area for still and video immediately in front of the sculpture unveiling.

It would be helpful to know in advance if your organization plans to cover this event. Please contact Tim Donovan (608-242-3050) or Jackie Guthrie (608-242-3053) and we will be happy to help with any technical arrangements you require.

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